

NPFMC Management Priorities – Framework for Council Discussion

September 2026¹

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1 Introduction and Summary of Action

At the June 2026 meeting, the Council discussed capacity constraints and other factors affecting the pace of implementation and development of Council recommendations. The Council requested that staff develop a framework to help the Council organize a constructive conversation about prioritization at the October 2026 meeting.

As context for this request, the Council has actively been addressing concerns about annual operating costs increasing due to inflation (especially for meetings, travel, and insurance) since 2023², and the resulting need to control costs unless additional funds become available. The transition from 5 to 4 meetings a year has been a component of those changes, along with holding some meetings in a virtual mode, and other cost control measures. Additionally, in the last two years there have been significant staff capacity reductions at NMFS, both at the Regional Office and at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC). Spending priorities identified in the President’s Budget request to Congress recommend continued reductions in funding to NMFS, although to date, Council and overall NMFS funding levels have been relatively stable (not adjusting for inflation).³ The agency has, however, repeatedly indicated its intent to reassess priorities and budgets within the agency, and therefore there is an opportunity for the Council to identify and convey its priorities regarding which actions are essential, to ensure ongoing Council-NMFS alignment.

At the annual Council Coordination Committee (CCC) meeting in May 2026, the Council participated in an [assessment](#) of needs and priorities across all eight Councils, and also provided a short update on our [North Pacific regional priorities](#). The Council expressed concern about staffing vulnerabilities at the NMFS Regional Office, particularly the loss of specialized expertise and the resulting reduction in backup capacity for critical functions. For example, the regional office has lost programming and technical staff who support critical operations such as the catch accounting system and restricted access management’s issuance of quota to begin the fishing year. The Councils also highlighted concerns about delays in the timely review and implementation of actions that have been recommended through the Council process. These concerns continue to impact the Council’s effectiveness, and provide an impetus for Council prioritization to ensure clear communication about the Council’s most important recommendations.

This paper provides a framework for Council discussion in October about priorities. To provide background and context, the sections that follow provide an overview of Council actions categorized as required and discretionary, to distinguish the “must do” items from those that the Council “would like to

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² [Executive Committee Meeting Summary, April 2023](#)

³ The Council also received some additional funding in 2026 to support work associated with the Executive Order 14276.

do.” Additionally, the paper provides a series of factors for Council members to consider with respect to assigning priorities to individual actions.

The paper also references workload priorities for staff in the Sustainable Fisheries Division at NMFS Regional Office, which is the division most actively involved in developing and implementing Council-related management actions. A brief discussion of current NMFS priorities for implementing Council recommendations is included in the paper, however there is more detail provided in the NMFS management report (Agenda B2) and specifically the Status of Actions.

Finally, if the Council is interested in taking the time to set priorities, it may be helpful in conjunction to take a broader look at how new work is tasked within the Council process. The final section of the paper provides recommendations for restructuring staff tasking and public expectations for how and when the Council will consider initiating new actions, as part of this broader discussion.

Staff recommendations for Council action in October

This discussion paper will be presented during the B1 Executive Director’s Report at the October Council meeting. There are several other components of the B reports that are relevant to a prioritization discussion, especially presentations on progress with the Executive Order 14276 *Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness* and other updates in the B2 NMFS management report. The Council may also receive public testimony during the B reports that will be relevant to Council member considerations. The agenda for the October meeting signals that Council members will receive these *inputs* during the B reports, but schedules the Council *discussion* of prioritization for later in the meeting, under E1.

The paper recommends that the Council may wish to consider a discussion structured around the following potential actions:

1. Highlight 3-4 priorities among the Council’s discretionary actions.
2. Review the “Items not yet started” list on the 3-meeting outlook to see whether any items should be removed for the present.
3. Affirm and/or provide input on NMFS’ implementation priorities.
4. Consider changing approach to staff tasking at future meetings, to constrain Council tasking of new actions to designated meetings once or twice a year.
5. Commit to an annual strategic planning discussion in October, to develop priorities for the upcoming year.

Caveat regarding expected outcomes of prioritization

While it is useful for the Council to engage in prioritization to better communicate to staff and the public regarding how best to use available staff capacity, it is also important to set expectations about the outcome. At both the Council office and the Regional Office, we strive to optimize staff capacity to effectively achieve as much as possible. Our staff each have their own individual expertise and experience, and while the Council’s priorities will drive the overall assignment of tasks and progress, particularly for Council staff, we will also continue to try to make progress on all of the Council’s tasking where possible. Many factors influence our ability to bring back a tasked analysis, including the scope of the task, how much analysis and writing is necessary to allow the Council to take a meaningful action at review, whether specific expertise is needed from partners (NMFS, ADFG, IPHC), and other factors. Where there are bottlenecks, we will resolve them in accordance with Council priorities to the extent possible, but there may be simpler analyses or actions, or ones that do not require a great deal of partner expertise, on which we are able to make progress in parallel to the Council priorities. In effect, **we want to set clear expectations that while the Council priorities will be our primary guidance for staff capacity and Council agenda capacity, the Council may see some actions scheduled for review sooner than the prioritized actions.**

2 Council Functions and Required Actions

In order to provide the context for Council prioritization, it is helpful to first understand the degree to which the Council is focusing its capacity on actions that are required under statute, and those where the Council has discretion as to whether to take them up. The following subsections provide a brief summary of the Council's core legal responsibilities, as well as how that translates into time spent on required actions at Council meetings.

2.1 Legal mandates for Council

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management and Conservation Act (MSA) defines the following core functions for Councils:

- Prepare **Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) and amendments** for fisheries that require conservation and management
- Conduct **public hearings** so as to allow all interested persons an opportunity to be heard in the development of FMPs and amendments
- Review of **assessments and specifications** for FMP species with respect to optimum yield, and develop annual catch limits
- Develop multi-year **research priorities**, FMP amendments to comply with statutory directives
- Conduct **other activities consistent with MSA**, such as defining/reviewing Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and impacts to EFH, measures to prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks, bycatch reporting and minimization measures, allocation of fishing opportunity when necessary, and periodic formal review of Limited Access Privilege Programs (LAPPs).
- **Propose regulations** the Council deems necessary and appropriate for implementing FMPs and amendments or modifying such regulations

The Council also has other core responsibilities that stem from other laws:

- Propose measures for **halibut management** under the Northern Pacific Halibut Act
- Engage with NMFS and USFWS on measures to minimize **incidental take of species listed** under the Endangered Species Act or Marine Mammal Protection Act

Finally, the Council also has a role to understand and comment on connected activities of external partners:

- Informational reports (typically "**B reports**"): agency activities and updates, cooperative reports, status reports (eg bycatch report, salmon genetics, seabird bycatch, allocation reviews)
- Exempted Fishing Permit (**EFP**) and **EFH** consultations
- **Commenting on policies and activities** that affect Council-managed fisheries and resources: policies, proposals, or strategic plans from NMFS (regionally or nationally), other Federal agencies, and Congress.

2.2 Required actions for the Council

Table 1 provides a high-level summary of the actual meeting time spent on select agenda items over the past few years, with some assumptions made to acknowledge the Council's transition from the previous 5 meeting annual cycle to the current 4 meeting annual schedule.

Actions grouped into “MSA-Required Council Actions” are those that the Council must take to fulfill its obligations under the MSA. This is primarily represented by actions to recommend harvest specifications for FMP species.

Other MSA-required actions include reviewing Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) components of FMPs at least every five years; developing 5-year research priorities for fisheries, fisheries interactions, habitats, and other areas of research that are necessary for management purposes; and reviewing Limited Access Privilege Programs (LAPPs) 5 years after program implementation, and no less frequently than once every 7 years thereafter. Specific agenda timing for these other MSA-required actions is not included in the table because they do not occur annually; in years when they occur, items would be captured within the “remaining time available” category in the table. When these actions arise, they generally take significant time as iterative reviews, and under the current Council process, they are scheduled over multiple Council meetings.

Other actions in the table are those that occur regularly under the current Council process, but are not statutorily required and are thus categorized as “Routine Council Agenda Items.”

Generally, the total scheduled time for a Council meeting is 5-7 days (although the most frequent duration is 5.5-6 days) thus between 15-20% of a meeting is roughly equivalent to one day. Given the current meeting structure and timing:

- Annual Required Actions (harvest specifications) make up 20-40% of October/December meeting time and 5-10% Feb/May meeting time.
- B Reports occur at every meeting and take 15-30% of meeting time.
- Staff Tasking, which includes a review of committee membership and upcoming meetings, discussion of scheduling, and testimony and motions for new tasking not specifically related to an action agenda item, occurs at every meeting and often accounts for 10-15% of the meeting time.
- After the required and discretionary items that occur annually, 30-55% of the meeting time remains for additional items. On average, this has allowed for **up to 3 C items** (major issues, generally initial review and final action agenda items in addition to required items as listed in Table 1) **and 5 D items** (other issues, for example discussion papers or informational reports.)

Table 1 Assessment of Council agenda time spent on required or routine agenda items
15-20% of a meeting is roughly equivalent to one meeting day.

	OCT	DEC	FEB/MAR	MAY
MSA-REQUIRED COUNCIL ACTIONS				
Harvest Specifications	20-25%	25-40%	5-10%	5%
BSAI/GOA Groundfish	10-15%	20-30%		
BSAI Crab/Scallop Specs	5-10%	1%		5-10%
Cook Inlet Salmon			5-10%	
Charter Halibut		5-10%		
Other Actions on Multiyear Cycle				
EFH – workplan, report, FMP amendments (every 5 yrs)				
Research priorities (with SSC; req 5 yrs, in practice 3 yrs)				
Limited Access Privilege Program reviews (every 5 or 7 yrs)				
ROUTINE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS				
B reports	25%	15%	25%	30%
Monitoring	5%			5-10%
Observer ADP	x			
Observer Annual Report				x
E Staff Tasking	15%	10%	5-10%	5-10%
REMAINING TIME AVAILABLE TO SCHEDULE	30%	35%	55%	45%

In general, the remaining time allows the Council to schedule the following number of additional agenda items:

C items - major issues: initial/final action items	3	0-2	4	2
D items - other issues: discussion papers/reports	2-4	1-5	3	2-5

3 NMFS Regional Office Priorities and Actions in Implementation

The NMFS Management Report for this meeting includes an updated description of the hierarchy of workload actions for staff in the Sustainable Fisheries Division at the NMFS Regional Office. A version of this list was first shared with the Council in October 2022. It is important to highlight here that the first priority for NMFS staff is activities that support ongoing fishery operations, which in addition to ongoing inseason management and publishing regulations implementing harvest specifications, also includes being responsive to the public on FOIA, litigation, and emergency rules.

For FMP and regulatory amendment work, NMFS will generally prioritize implementing Council final action recommendations over providing input to actions and analyses that are still under discussion at the Council. This is particularly relevant to some of the actions that are on the Council's tasking list when they require more intensive input from NMFS staff, usually because technical regulatory or implementation expertise is critical to the Council's recommendation on an action.

Additionally, the NMFS Management Report also provides an update on the status of current NMFS priorities for implementing Council recommendations where the Council has already taken final action. As part of this discussion, **the Council has an opportunity to provide feedback to NMFS on implementation priorities as appropriate.** A description of progress on Council-recommended actions is shown in the Status of Actions report posted under B2 NMFS Management Report, and Council members may ask questions about any of these actions under B2.

4 Prioritization of Discretionary Council Actions

4.1 Proposed Considerations for Prioritization

A primary way for the Council to manage capacity is to be strategic about actions that the Council initiates or requests. While it is the Council's obligation to prepare FMP amendments for fisheries that require conservation and management, as described in Section 2, the Council maintains considerable discretion regarding which actions meet that standard. The decision about when to develop Council management actions, and the scope of alternatives to consider in that tasking, has a substantial impact on the Council and agency staff capacity to respond to Council recommendations.

As part of this agenda item, the Council has the opportunity to evaluate existing tasking to either elevate particular actions as priorities, and/or remove items from the tasking list if they do not meet a priority standard. Additionally, the Council may also want to consider setting expectations for how to consider tasking new items (discussed in more detail in Section 5).

The following series of questions may be helpful for the Council to review when deciding on the relative merits of a proposed FMP management change.

Impact Considerations	• Who is affected - which fishery, which persons? • What types of impact will the action have - improve conservation, improve efficiency, enhance compliance, increase or reduce costs?
Legal / Executive Considerations	• Is the action on the Council's Executive Order 14276 workplan? Does it meet the EO 14276 criteria? • Relationship to the Council's statutory authority? • What is the likelihood the issue could be addressed through some other non-regulatory administrative (NMFS) or industry process?
Capacity / Logistics Considerations	• Has the Council already invested staff and public time into the development of an analysis? • What staff capacity and Council agenda time is required to develop the analysis and implement Council recommendations? Are the analysis and alternatives simple or complex?

Note that there is also a different type of prioritization that the Council could discuss, regarding how to undertake its required actions (as described in Section 2) but in a less intensive way. Some recent examples include: encouraging agencies to provide a written-only B report if appropriate (2022); moving scallop harvest specifications to a 3-year cycle (2026); delaying research priorities from a 3- to a 4-year cycle this time (2026) while remaining within the MSA-required 5-year timeframe. Staff will continue to identify and discuss these possibilities with the Council as they arise, but this type of restructuring is not the primary focus of this proposed framework for prioritizing discretionary actions.

4.2 Current management measure actions before the Council

Table 2 lists all the actions that are currently tasked by the Council, and represented on the [3-meeting outlook](#). The table identifies whether the action is also on the Council's EO 14276 workplan, the stage of current review, and an estimate of what level of NMFS coordination is required for this analysis prior to Council final action. In most cases, the Council motion initiating the action has been linked to the next step. The actions have been roughly sorted in an order indicating how much Council and staff time has been invested in each analysis to date.

Table 2 Management measure actions under development, as of September 2026

Sort order roughly indicates how much staff time and/or Council agenda time has been invested in each action to date (based on a quick assessment by staff).

Action	Next Step at Council	Scheduled for...	EO workplan?	Council has reviewed a version	NMFS coordination needs?	Category of action
IFQ cost recovery improvements	Final action	May 27	x	x	High	Reporting/ Monitoring
GOA Tanner crab protection measures	Initial Review (2nd)	Feb 27 (T)		x	Med	Bycatch
BS Herring PSC limit changes	Initial review	Feb 27 (T)	x		Med	Bycatch
Omnibus FMP recordkeeping and reporting	Initial/final review	Dec 26 (T)	x		Med	Other
A80 vessel replacement	Initial review	Dec 26			Low	Reporting/ Monitoring
Charter halibut permit data request	Discussion paper	Oct 26		x	Low	Halibut IFQ/ Charter
CQE/IFQ adjustments	Expanded discussion paper	Oct 26	x	x	Med	Halibut IFQ/ Charter
PSC disposition	Discussion paper	Dec 26 (T)			High	Reporting/ Monitoring
ACL overages inseason authority	Initial review	May 27			High	BSAI/GOA gfish mgmt
Harvest Control Rule adjustments	Progress update/ identify alternatives	May 27 (T)		x	High	Other
Groundfish FMP policy modernization	Ecosystem Cmte recc/ identify alternatives	Dec 26		x	Low	BSAI/GOA gfish mgmt
EFH 5-year review	Review fishing Effects model (SSC)	Feb 27 (T)		x	High	Other
NSRKC participation recency	Expanded discussion paper	TBD		x	Low	BSAI Crab Mgmt
Deduction for bled sablefish	Initial review	TBD	x		High	Halibut IFQ/ Charter
Lead Level 2 Endorsement criteria	Initial review	Dec 26 (T)	x		High	Reporting/ Monitoring
Pelagic Trawl Gear Performance Standard	Discussion paper	May 27 (T)			Med	BSAI/GOA gfish mgmt
AFA catch accounting	Discussion paper	TBD			High	Reporting/ Monitoring
EM for GOA Rockfish Program	Develop EFP	TBD	x		High	Reporting/ Monitoring
Cook Inlet Salmon tribal fishery feasibility	Discussion paper	TBD			High	Other
Pot gear reg consistency	Discussion paper	TBD	x		High	BSAI/GOA gfish mgmt
NMFS-approved motion scales in sablefish fishery	Discussion paper	TBD	x		High	Reporting/ Monitoring
Streamline charter halibut timing	Discussion paper	TBD	x		High	Halibut IFQ/ Charter

4.3 Staff recommendations based on current actions

As described in Section 4.1, the Council can approach prioritization in a number of different ways, and the table in Section 4.2 provides a preliminary basis for assessing the factors (without staff speculating too far ahead of an analysis on the questions of potential impacts). The caveat provided in the introduction is important to remember here – this exercise is intended to provide guidance to the Executive Director and to NMFS about how to respond to Council priorities. It is not reasonable that staff will only work on the prioritized projects in sequence; rather staff will use the Council priorities to guide a response to bottlenecks while still optimizing capacity to make progress across the Council’s tasking.

Given that context, the Council might consider a **recommendation to focus on identifying a few key priorities across the entire list**, rather than prioritizing each action. The Council could, for example, highlight 3-4 priorities, which could either be specific projects as have been tasked, or categorized in some other way that the Council finds useful.

It may also be useful for the Council to consider whether there are items that are currently on the 3-meeting outlook, particularly in the “Items Not Yet Tasked” section, which could be removed. Given the passage of time between when some motions were made and the current situation regarding capacity and urgency, it may be helpful to signal to the public that these actions have not yet risen to the top of the list for assigning staff for several years, and are unlikely to within the next 2-3 years. This does not provide a judgment on the merit of the issues, only on their relative priority compared to other actions in front of the Council. Should circumstances change or the Council and agency recover capacity, the Council could re-task these issues in the future.

If that is the Council’s interest, **staff would recommend three actions that may be appropriate to remove from the tasking list:**

- **Pot gear regulation consistency:** In February 2022, the Council [requested](#) a discussion paper exploring potential changes to simplify the regulations describing the use of pot gear, including gear configuration requirements. NMFS proposed this action recognizing that the Council has authorized several amendments to pot gear requirements for specific fisheries in recent years, and it can be difficult for the public to understand what is applicable when as individual requirements are spread out in different places among the regulations. While it continues to be worthwhile, other priorities are likely to prevent NMFS from preparing this paper in the near term.
- **Sablefish motion scales:** In October 2023, the Council [requested](#) a discussion paper on an option to allow freezer longliners to use NMFS-approved flowscales to account for their sablefish harvest. The Council would be comfortable for this change to be authorized under NMFS’ existing record-keeping and reporting authorities, but understands that NMFS national guidance has determined that any regulatory change would need to be approved by the Council directly. Since then, NMFS has started working with this fleet on electronic monitoring and the Council may want to consider a more comprehensive action for catch monitoring in the future.
- **Charter halibut management measures timing:** In December 2023, the Council made two [requests](#) of staff, to provide information on the performance of the Charter Halibut Registration program, and to consider alternative timelines for preparing annual charter halibut management measures. The Council is reviewing the first request at this meeting, as it was identified as a higher priority. With respect to the management measures [timeline](#) and options to adjust it, this involves a complicated process to collaborate across agencies to consider potential regulatory changes, and explore and mitigate any management concerns.

Finally, the Council has the option to provide feedback to the agency on their implementation priorities regarding proposed amendments on which the Council has already taken final action. Based on the information in the B2 NMFS management report, the Council may want to consider whether to **affirm or provide input on the agency’s implementation priorities.**

4.4 How do the NMFS Regional Priorities for Executive Order 14276 fit in?

The Council received a [letter](#) on July 2, 2026, from the NMFS Assistant Administrator, highlighting NMFS' regional priorities. In addition to the request for the Council to maintain momentum on items listed on the [October 2025 Council workplan](#), the letter identifies four action items for Council consideration:

- **Review Steller Sea Lion (SSL) Closure Boundaries** and consider drafting a proposed framework utilizing the best available science to modify and shrink closures where appropriate to safely improve access to fishing grounds and increase domestic production. *NEW*
- **Eliminate 2% IFQ deduction for blue sablefish**, to incentivize best practices and allow fishermen to increase the market value and profitability of this fishery. *ON COUNCIL'S EO WORKPLAN LIST (but not yet scheduled for review)*
- **Systematically assess current FMPs and consider removing species** that no longer require conservation and management, or redesignating them as Ecosystem Component species if helpful to achieve ecosystem management objectives. *NEW*
- Collaborate with NMFS on the expanded and continued use of Exempted Fishing Permits as agile management tools to test gear innovations, enhance value-added quality, and safely increase domestic production. *ON COUNCIL'S EO WORKPLAN LIST; in June 2026 Council supported NMFS updating Alaska-specific EFP regulations under Section 305(d) authority*

If the Council is interested in initiating action on any of the new items on this list, it may be helpful to do so before proceeding with any discussion about prioritization, so those new actions can be considered as part of the exercise. Regarding the systematic assessment of the current FMPs to see whether there are species that should be redesignate or removed, some staff work on this topic was undertaken in the past year in response to the NMFS request to develop a risk-value matrix, and therefore **the Council may wish to consider tasking a report to formalize a Council response.**

5 Council Process Changes to Support Strategic Planning – Changes to Staff Tasking

To better facilitate the impact of a Council discussion on prioritization, it may also be helpful to take a broader look at how new work is tasked within the Council process. For many years, the Council has scheduled a staff tasking agenda item at every meeting during which there is an opportunity for any Council member to initiate new tasking, based on input from the agency, the public, or their own personal interests. While this provides a very accessible and open way for new issues to get on the tasking list, it does not always set expectations appropriately for the public as to when staff will be available to work on those issues.

Other Councils use a more structured system for new tasking, in combination with prioritization and strategic planning. If the Council is interested in moving in this direction, there are two process recommendations that could help facilitate such a move.

1. Consider changing approach to staff tasking at future meetings, to constrain Council tasking of new actions to designated meetings once or twice a year
2. Commit to an annual strategic planning discussion in October, to develop priorities for the upcoming year

Replace staff tasking with an ED/Council Chair wrap up, and dedicated new projects agenda item

To limit the number of meetings at which the Council considers initiating new actions, staff recommends removing the current staff tasking agenda item, at least from meetings at which new actions would not be

considered. Staff have consistently informed the public when asked that new proposals should be submitted to staff tasking, as this has been the Council's practice. Instead, under a new approach, we would inform the public that new proposals would be considered either once a year, for example at the October meeting, or if the Council prefers, twice a year, with an opportunity at every other meeting (e.g., October and February). For this approach to be effective, Council members would not consider initiating new actions at other meetings, although emergency action could always be submitted for Council consideration or consultation, for actions that meet those specific criteria.

For members of the public who wish to submit comments on items that are not on the Council's agenda, we would direct them either to make their comments under the B reports or at a future meeting.

Under this approach, staff would still intend to include a wrap-up agenda item at the end of the meeting, so that the Chair and Executive Director could provide Council members with a sense of future timing for scheduled items based on actions taken during the meeting. Viewed more as a wrap up than a tasking agenda item, this would not be an action item for the Council, and so would not be associated with a public testimony opportunity.

Annual strategic planning / prioritization discussion

Combined with the suggested changes to staff tasking, the Council could consider providing a dedicated opportunity once a year, for example in October, to review near term Council priorities for the upcoming year. Similar to the exercise at this meeting that is the subject of this paper, staff would review the available time for discretionary management actions compared to time available on the upcoming year's agendas, and the Council would be able to identify its top 3-4 key actions as well as curate the tasking list based on new information.

Ensuring there is a dedicated meeting annually for strategic planning would signal clearly to the public when is the appropriate time to participate and provide input on Council priorities.

Other ongoing staff efforts to address Council efficiency and planning

Staff have highlighted in the past that we are more frequently running into scheduling constraints resulting from the **available SSC review time**. The change from 5 to 4 meetings per year has had a larger impact than predicted on the SSC's agenda and consequently the Council's. While our estimates of the overall time required for SSC review indicated there would not be an outsize impact from the transition, we did not account for the constraints of having less flexibility across 4 meetings than with 5, given that October and December are largely taken up with harvest specifications for the SSC. Adding Cook Inlet specifications has added another firm time constraint for the SSC's agenda. Additionally, unpredictable events such as government shutdowns, of which there have been more in recent years, also take a toll on SSC members' workload.

The [staff paper](#) from October 2024 describes how decisions are made about scheduling items for SSC review. Staff will continue to explore possibilities for improving efficiency, including more clearly defining roles and responsibilities among the Plan Teams, SSC, and the Agency to avoid redundancy in harvest specifications review.

Finally, Council staff will continue to consider alternative approaches to the preparation of review documents for the Council. At present, we focus on bringing **draft analyses** to the Council that fulfill all of the legal requirements of an analysis (NEPA, MSA, etc.), in addition to exploring all of the questions that the SSC, Advisory Panel, Council members, and the public may be interested in. We will continue to consider other options that may be available under revised NEPA regulations (including new page limit requirements). Examples could include developing a streamlined approach focusing on the most pertinent impacts, or more utilization of the "alternatives considered but rejected" section to acknowledge alternatives that have been evaluated in iterative reviews, but which may not need to be carried forward into a final document.